

# FORT GANSEVOORT CURBED

## Murals on 9 City Buildings Will Help You Process Your Pandemic Feelings

By Diana Budds February 08, 2021



Photo: Orange Barrel Media, Art: Courtesy of the Christopher Myers

**The Project:** *Walls for a Cause NYC*, a public mural project by nine contemporary artists and an online exhibition titled *On the Other Side of Something*, on view through March 28.

**The Backstory:** Late last summer, Joeonna Bellorado-Samuels, the director of Jack Shainman and founder of We Buy Gold — an art gallery founded in Bed-Stuy that has since become nomadic — was catching up with a friend who told her, “Well, we’re on the other side of something.” That *something* wasn’t anything specific; it was more of a feeling brought on by a city that had been profoundly changed by the pandemic and Black Lives Matter protests. Bellorado-Samuels wrote the phrase on her office wall, thinking it might make more sense in the future. “How we’re experiencing this time is something we’ll be unpacking for years to come,” she says. She’s still reflecting on what

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that phrase means, and her latest exhibition is a continued exploration of a feeling that's still hard to articulate and an invitation to look at the art and think about what that ongoing, ever-present transformation means.

**The People Behind It:** We Buy Gold, the gallery that's worked with artists like Alexandra Bell, Nina Chanel Abney, and Solange; Diana Nawi, an independent curator (most recently of a Michael Rakowitz exhibition) and a former associate curator at the Pérez Art Museum Miami; and Orange Barrel Media, which often donates its billboards for public art and activism initiatives, like a nationwide voting campaign last fall. *Walls for a Cause NYC* includes free ad space for Project Eats, a neighborhood-based food-justice nonprofit, and a portion of the artwork sales from *On the Other Side of Something* will benefit the organization's work.

**Here's What They Have to Say About It:** This is the first time We Buy Gold has organized an outdoor exhibition. "The opportunity to literally go out into the streets seemed really exciting, especially when we feel so desperate to be outside," Bellorado-Samuels says. "I like that the murals are in such different neighborhoods, with different histories and personalities. It's not allowing the conversation to be about one specific place."

**The Artists Involved:** María Berrío, an artist who works in collage; Felipe Baeza, a printmaker; Theresa Chromati, a painter; Ariel Dannielle, a painter; Chioma Ebinama, an artist who usually works in ink and watercolor; Marcus Jahmal, a painter; Christopher Myers, a writer, artist, and shadow puppet-maker; Naudline Pierre, a painter; Ilana Savdie, a painter and visual artist.

**What You Can Expect to See:** Abstract portraits that explore themes about identity, introspection, and transformation — like Ariel Dannielle's self-portrait set in an imaginary bathroom, which explores daily rituals; Christopher Myers's collagelike image of a Black man's torso engulfed in flames; and Theresa Chromati's mesmerizing and surreal painting of a woman holding a flower (one of Chromati's recurring scrotum flowers, a symbol of power) and kicking her leg toward the sky. If you look closely, you'll see another recurring motif: an eye of intuition to the left of the figure. The work is titled *rested erection, moment collision (she is watching and I am shifting)*.

"I like to pack a lot of things into my work," Chromati says. "I am always saying more is more. I wanted [the artwork] to feel uncomfortable, to appear mesmerizing and alluring and a bit bothersome at the same time. Those are the emotions that are cycling through my mind, and in a lot of people's minds ... Thinking about how I feel in general between last year and this year: So many things have been building up and shedding and expanding and moving toward the top. It feels like an explosion that's about to happen, and a very positive one."

**Where to Spot It:** In Manhattan: West 29th Street and Sixth Avenue (Naudline Pierre) and Great Jones Street and Bowery (Theresa Chromati).

In Brooklyn: Johnson Avenue and Scott Avenue (Felipe Baeza); Bedford Avenue and Atlantic Avenue (Ariel Dannielle); Morgan Avenue and Harrison Place (Chioma Ebinama); Bogart Street and Cook Street (Marcus Jahmal); Bogart Street and Harrison Place (Christopher Myers); Dobbin Street and Norman Avenue (Ilana Savdie); Van Brunt Street and Verona Street (María Berrío).

**When It Ends:** The exhibition is on view until March 28.